



School Leader's Guide to the 2015 Accountability Determinations

This guide is intended to help district and school leaders understand Massachusetts' accountability measures, and provides an explanation of the information contained in 2015 district and school accountability reports. For questions, please call (781) 338-3550 or email esea@doe.mass.edu.

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Overview of Massachusetts' accountability measures

In February 2012, Massachusetts was granted flexibility from certain No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements. Prior to seeking this flexibility, the Commonwealth's schools and districts were assessed based on both the state's five-level framework for accountability and assistance and the requirements of NCLB. The 2012-13 school year marked the first year of Massachusetts' implementation of a unified system for classifying districts and schools.

Massachusetts' accountability system measures each school and district's progress toward the goal of reducing proficiency gaps by half between the 2010-11 and 2016-17 school years. Massachusetts uses the Progress and Performance Index (PPI) and school percentiles to classify schools into one of five accountability and assistance levels. Schools making sufficient progress toward narrowing proficiency gaps are classified into Level 1, while the state's lowest performing schools are classified into Levels 4 and 5. In general, districts are classified into a level based on the level of their lowest performing school.

Progress and Performance Index (PPI)

The PPI combines information about narrowing proficiency gaps, growth, and graduation and dropout rates into a number between 0 and 100. A PPI of 75 or higher indicates that a group, school, or district is on track toward meeting its proficiency gap-narrowing goals. All districts, schools, and groups with sufficient data are assigned an annual PPI based on two years of data and a cumulative PPI based on at least three annual PPIs. The cumulative PPI generally represents a performance trend over four years.

Reporting groups

School and district accountability reports include PPIs for the "all students" group and for eleven subgroups, including: high needs students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, current and former English language learners (ELLs), and up to seven racial and ethnic groups.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) began reporting data for the economically disadvantaged subgroup in 2015. Unlike the low income subgroup, which was reported through 2014 and was determined based on a student's eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, the new economically disadvantaged group only includes those students who participate in one or more of the following state-administered programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Transitional Assistance for Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC); the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) foster care program; and MassHealth (Medicaid). Students in the economically disadvantaged subgroup are also included in the high needs subgroup.

The high needs group is an unduplicated count of all students in a school or district belonging to at least one of the following individual subgroups: students with disabilities, ELL and Former ELL students, and economically disadvantaged students. The inclusion of the high needs group in accountability determinations holds more schools accountable for the performance of students belonging to historically disadvantaged groups.

If a particular student group does not meet the minimum size (20 students for the all students group, or 25 students for a given subgroup¹), a PPI will not be reported for that group. ESE determines student groups based on enrollment information provided by districts through the [Student Information Management System \(SIMS\)](#) data collection process.

Annual PPI

Indicators and targets

A district's, school's or subgroup's annual PPI is a measure of improvement toward its own targets over a two-year period on up to seven core indicators:

- *Narrowing proficiency gaps in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science:*

A district, school, or subgroup's "proficiency gap" is the distance between the group's 2011 Composite Performance Index (CPI) and a CPI of 100. The goal for all districts, schools, and groups is to halve that gap in the six year period between 2011 and 2017.

The CPI is a 100-point index that assigns 100, 75, 50, 25, or 0 points to each student participating in MCAS and MCAS-Alternate Assessment tests based on their achievement. The CPI is a measure of the extent to which all students are progressing toward proficiency. When all students in a group score Proficient or Advanced, the group's CPI will be 100. CPIs are generated separately for ELA, mathematics, and science, and at all levels – state, district, school, and subgroup. The CPI is calculated by first multiplying the number of students at each MCAS/MCAS-Alt achievement level by the number of points corresponding to that level. The total points for each achievement level are then added together, and divided by the total number of students in the group. The result is a number between 0 and 100, which constitutes the CPI for that subject and group.

In 2015, ESE has reported *transitional* CPIs for those schools that administered ELA and mathematics PARCC tests in the spring of 2015. As with traditional CPIs calculated using MCAS data, transitional CPIs for PARCC assign 0, 25, 50, 75, or 100 CPI points to each student based on their achievement on PARCC ELA and mathematics tests, and are used in the calculation of state, district, school, and subgroup achievement for accountability purposes. PARCC transitional CPIs were calculated using a procedure known as equipercentile linking, essentially placing PARCC results on the MCAS scale. As a result, CPI scores used for 2015 accountability reporting have an equivalent meaning regardless of whether they are based on MCAS or PARCC results.

¹ Over the two-year period between 2014 and 2016, Massachusetts will increase the number of schools and districts held accountable for student subgroups by lowering the minimum group size for accountability determinations from 30 in 2014 to 25 in 2015 and 20 in 2016. In 2015, this change only applies to subgroups in schools and districts that were large enough to receive accountability determinations in 2014. The minimum group size for students in the aggregate—all students in a school or district—continues to be 20.

The table below shows a sample CPI calculation for a group of 40 students. Note that PARCC scaled score ranges will vary by grade and subject. For additional information, see the PARCC CPI concordance tables in [Appendix A](#).

Table 1: Sample CPI calculation

MCAS Achievement Level (Scaled Score Range)	MCAS-Alt Achievement Level	PARCC Scaled Score Range	Points per Student	# of Students	Total Points
<i>Proficient or Advanced</i> (240-280)	<i>Progressing</i> (certain disabilities) ²	<i>Varies by grade & subject</i>	100	25	2500
<i>Needs Improvement – High</i> (230-238)	<i>Progressing</i> ³ or <i>Emerging</i>	<i>Varies by grade & subject</i>	75	5	375
<i>Needs Improvement – Low</i> (220-228)	<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Varies by grade & subject</i>	50	5	500
<i>Warning/Failing – High</i> (210-218)	<i>Portfolio Incomplete</i>	<i>Varies by grade & subject</i>	25	4	100
<i>Warning/Failing – Low</i> (200-208)	<i>Portfolio not Submitted</i>	<i>Varies by grade & subject</i>	0	1	0
			Total	40	3475
			CPI (3475 ÷ 40)		86.9

Table 2 below demonstrates how to calculate the proficiency gap-narrowing targets for two sample student groups. Group 1's starting point is a 2011 baseline CPI of 64. A CPI of 100 represents proficiency for all students in the group. Therefore, the group's proficiency gap is represented by 100 minus 64, or 36 CPI points. Half of that figure is 18 points. The state goal is to halve proficiency gaps by the 2016-17 school year; consequently, the CPI for Group 1 must, at a minimum, increase by 3 points each year to be on track toward a CPI of 82 by 2016-17 (64 + 18 = 82). A similar calculation is also shown for Group 2.

Table 2: Sample proficiency gap-narrowing target calculation

Calculating the gap-narrowing target	Group 1	Group 2
1. Obtain the group's 2011 CPI (the baseline for the 2017 target)	64	76
2. Calculate the proficiency gap (100 minus 2011 CPI)	36	24
3. Calculate the gap-narrowing target (proficiency gap divided by 2)	18	12
4. Calculate the 2017 target (2011 CPI plus gap-halving target)	82	88
5. Calculate annual targets* (gap-halving target divided by 6 years)	3	2

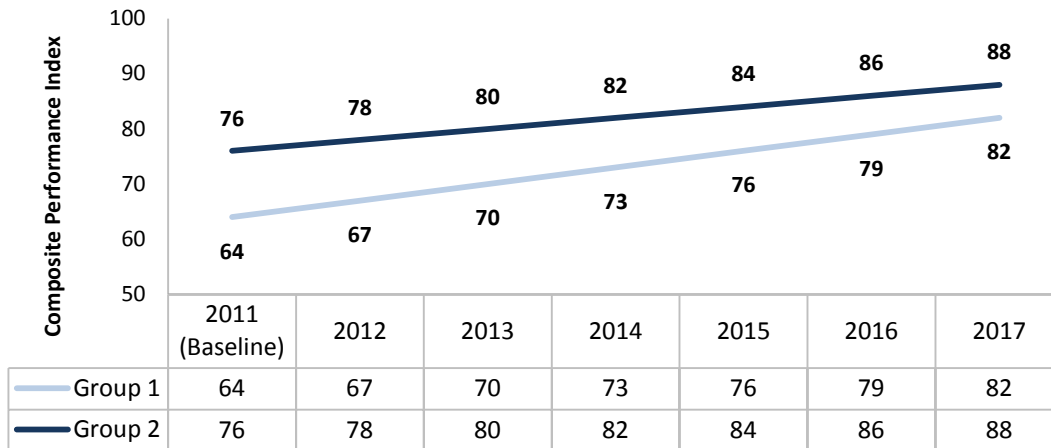
* A group's annual targets between 2011 and 2017 are fixed; interim targets between 2011 and 2017 are not adjusted based on the group's actual achievement across those years.

² Students with the following disabilities who score *Progressing* on MCAS-Alt may be awarded 100 CPI points: Intellectual, Sensory/Deaf and Blind, Multiple Disabilities, Autism, and Developmental Delay

³ Students with the following disabilities who score *Progressing* on MCAS-Alt may be awarded 75 CPI points: Sensory/Hard of Hearing or Deaf, Communication, Sensory/Vision Impairment or Blind, Emotional, Physical, Health, Specific Learning Disabilities, Neurological

Table 3 provides a visual representation of the student achievement targets calculated for both groups in Table 2 above. Note that if both groups successfully halve proficiency gaps in 6 years, the distance between the groups – the achievement gap – will also be reduced by half.

Table 3: Sample proficiency gap-narrowing targets



- *Growth in ELA and mathematics:*

All districts, schools, and subgroups are expected to demonstrate growth in student achievement each year between 2011 and 2017. ESE uses median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) to measure how achievement for a group of students has grown or changed over time.

As with achievement results, ESE has reported transitional SGPs for those schools that administered ELA and mathematics PARCC tests in the spring of 2015. Transitional SGPs are calculated separately for ELA and mathematics, and are used in the calculation of state, district, school, and subgroup improvement for accountability purposes. PARCC transitional SGPs measure the growth of all students who took PARCC in spring 2015 based on the prior year MCAS scores of their academic peers.

The goal for all groups is to achieve or exceed an SGP of at least one point above the historical state median of 50. Groups with a median SGP of 51 or higher receive full credit for this PPI indicator.

- *Cohort graduation rate:*

In 2015, the four-year cohort graduation rate target is 80 percent and the five-year cohort target is 85 percent. For accountability determinations in any given year, the cohort graduation rate from the prior school year is used. For example, 2015 accountability determinations for the four-year rate use data from 2014; determinations for the five-year rate use data from 2013. Graduation rates from 2014 and 2013 cohorts are used in accountability determinations because this allows ESE to use a data set that has been thoroughly reviewed by district and ESE staff. ESE will not have complete graduation rate data for the 2015 cohort until late 2015, after the October SIMS reporting period and the 2015 cohort data review period have closed.

Districts, schools, and subgroups will be awarded PPI points if they meet the Commonwealth's annual targets in a given year for either the four-or five-year cohort graduation rate, whichever is higher. If, in a given year, a group is below the annual target but improves from the prior year by 2.5 percent or more, it will receive partial credit. Graduation rates are only used in PPI calculations for schools serving grades 9-12.

- *Annual dropout rate:*

All districts, schools, and subgroups are expected to halve the gap between their 2010 annual dropout rate, if one exists, and a rate of zero percent by the 2016-17 school year. For accountability determinations in any given year, the annual dropout rate from the prior year is used. For example, 2015 accountability determinations for the dropout rate use data from 2014. A group's annual target is calculated by halving the group's 2010 annual dropout rate and dividing by six. Dropout rates are only used in PPI calculations for schools serving grades 9-12.

Table 4: Sample dropout rate target calculation

Calculating the dropout rate target	Group 1
1. Obtain the group's 2010 dropout rate (the baseline for the 2017 target)	6.0
2. Calculate the 2017 target (2010 rate divided by 2)	3.0
3. Calculate annual targets* (2010 rate divided by 6 years)	0.5

*A group's annual targets between 2010 and 2016 are fixed; interim targets are not adjusted based on the group's actual rates across those years.

Awarding PPI points

An annual PPI is calculated for all groups that assessed a sufficient number of students in ELA and mathematics in the most recent year and one of the two prior years (20 for schools, 25 for subgroups). This means that at a minimum, groups must have a sufficient number of students to calculate a CPI in ELA and math.

Groups are awarded 0, 25, 50, 75, or 100 points based on making improvement relative to the group's own annual target, with a score of 75 considered to be "on target" for a given indicator. The annual PPI is then calculated by dividing the sum of the points earned for all indicators by the number of core indicators (2-7).

Table 5: Awarding PPI points

Points awarded	Rating
100	<i>Above Target</i>
75	<i>On Target</i>
50	<i>Improved Below Target</i>
25	<i>No Change</i>
0	<i>Declined</i>
-	<i>(Insufficient data or not applicable)</i>

Each indicator comprising the PPI has criteria designed to provide credit to high performing schools or schools with high performing groups. For example, a school or group that has a CPI of 97.5 or higher, or met the CPI of the 90th percentile for all groups in the school type category, is automatically awarded 100 PPI points and an “On Target” rating even if the group’s CPI declined from the prior year. Similarly, a school or group with a high graduation rate or a low dropout rate also receives credit.

Extra credit

There are several ways in which a group can earn extra credit toward its annual PPI calculation:

- *Improving student achievement:*

A group is awarded extra credit for reducing the percentage of students scoring *Warning/Failing* and/or by increasing the percentage of students scoring *Advanced* by 10 percent or more on ELA, mathematics, or science MCAS or PARCC tests.⁴

- *Reengaging dropouts:*

Schools serving high school grades can also earn extra credit points if they reengaged two or more dropouts in the previous school year. The dropout reengagement number is the count of high school dropouts that re-enroll in school for at least two consecutive SIMS collection periods or graduate or obtain a certificate of high school completion. This metric is a calculation of the official number of high school dropouts⁵ statewide from the previous four school years who returned to school in the 2013-14 school year. The reengaged student is credited to the school that re-enrolls/graduates them regardless of which school the student originally dropped out from. Extra credit points can be earned by the all students and high needs students groups only, and only at the school level.

- *Demonstrating strong growth in English language acquisition:*

Beginning in 2015, an additional opportunity to earn extra credit is available to schools and districts serving English language learners (ELLs) who demonstrate strong growth on the ACCESS for ELLs English language proficiency assessment. With several years of ACCESS results available, student growth percentiles based on ACCESS (SGPAs) can be calculated using the same methodology currently used for student growth percentile (SGP) calculations based on our statewide ELA and mathematics assessments. Median SGPAs provide a clear signal regarding the rate at which the ELLs in a particular school or district are increasing their English language proficiency, with SGPAs of 60 or higher on the 100-point SGPA scale representing particularly strong gains as compared to other ELLs who have similar ACCESS score histories. Extra credit is awarded if the ELL subgroup in the school or

⁴ For PARCC schools in 2015, extra credit for increasing the percentage of “Advanced” or decreasing the percentage of “Warning/Failing” students is determined through the equipercentile linking approach described on pages 3 and 17.

⁵ Dropouts are those students who dropped out of school between July 1 and June 30 of a given year and who did not return to school, graduate, or receive a GED by the following October 1.

district obtains a median SGPA of 60 or higher. Points are awarded to the ELL subgroup, the high needs subgroup, and the aggregate group. In order to receive this additional credit, the ELL subgroup must meet minimum group size requirements.

An additional 25 points are added to the total number of points for meeting each of these goals – up to 200 points – before dividing by the number of core indicators. Because of the potential to earn extra credit, the annual PPI for a group in a given year may exceed 100 points.

A sample extra credit calculation is in the table below.

Table 6: Sample calculation of change in *Advanced* percentage

Calculating the percent change in students scoring <i>Advanced</i> on MCAS or PARCC	Value
2014 % Advanced	25.0
2015 % Advanced	28.0
Difference (2015 % minus 2014 %)	3.0
Difference divided by 2014 %	0.12
Percentage change (Answer multiplied by 100)	12.0
Extra credit earned?	Yes

Cumulative PPI

A district's, school's or subgroup's cumulative PPI is the average of its annual PPIs over the most recent four year period, weighting recent years the most (1-2-3-4). For a school to be considered to be making progress toward narrowing proficiency gaps, the cumulative PPI for all students and high needs students must be 75 or higher.

A cumulative PPI is calculated for a group if it has at least three annual PPIs, including an annual PPI for the most recent year. If a group is missing an annual PPI for one year, that year is left out of the weighting (e.g., 1-X-3-4). While a group's annual PPI can exceed 100 points, the cumulative PPI is always reported on a 100-point scale.

Table 7: Sample PPI calculation

Indicators		2012	2013	2014	2015
English Language Arts	Narrowing proficiency gaps (CPI)	50	50	75	100
	Growth (SGP)	0	25	50	75
	Extra credit for decreasing % <i>Warning/Failing</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	25	0	0
	Extra credit for increasing % <i>Advanced</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	0	25	0
Mathematics	Narrowing proficiency gaps (CPI)	75	50	100	75
	Growth (SGP)	50	50	75	100
	Extra credit for decreasing % <i>Warning/Failing</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	0	0	25
	Extra credit for increasing % <i>Advanced</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	0	0	0
Science	Narrowing proficiency gaps (CPI)	50	50	50	100
	Extra credit for decreasing % <i>Warning/Failing</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	0	25	25
	Extra credit for increasing % <i>Advanced</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	0	0	25
High School	Annual dropout rate	75	100	75	100
	Cohort graduation rate	75	75	75	75
	Extra credit for reengaging dropouts (2 or more)	-	-	0	25
English Language Acquisition	Extra credit for high growth on ACCESS for ELLs assessment (Student Growth Percentile on ACCESS)	-	-	-	25
Points awarded for achievement, growth, and high school indicators		375	400	500	625
Points awarded for extra credit		0	25	50	125
Total points awarded		375	425	550	750
Number of achievement, growth, and high school indicators		7	7	7	7
Annual PPI		54	61	79	107
Cumulative PPI $(2012*1 + 2013*2 + 2014*3 + 2015*4) \div 10$		84			

2015 accountability reporting and the new economically disadvantaged subgroup

Beginning in 2015, ESE will no longer report data for the low income student group, and instead will report data for the economically disadvantaged group. As the state transitions to a new system of collecting poverty information, ESE intends to make a few adjustments to accountability calculations for both the economically disadvantaged and high needs subgroups.

Data related to achievement, improvement, and high school measures will be reported for the economically disadvantaged group in 2015. However, since this is the first year of the group's existence, annual and cumulative PPIs will not be reported. ESE intends to begin reporting annual and cumulative PPI data for this group beginning in 2016.

Additionally, in 2015 ESE will apply a "hold harmless" provision when calculating the annual PPI for the high needs group. Data reported for this group includes current and former ELLs, students with disabilities, and any student who was classified as economically disadvantaged in October, March, or June during the 2014-15 school year. The group's 2015 data will be used to calculate the 2015 annual PPI, which will then be compared to the high needs group's 2014 annual PPI. ESE will assign credit for whichever annual PPI is higher to the high needs group for 2015 and use that value in the cumulative PPI calculation.

Percentiles

School percentiles

School percentiles (1-99) are reported for schools with at least four years of data. This number is an indication of the school's overall performance relative to other schools that serve the same or similar grades. State law requires ESE to classify a school into Level 3 if it is among the lowest performing 20 percent of schools relative to other schools of the same school type (percentiles 1-20).

The role of school types in calculating school percentiles

All schools are classified into one of six school type categories based on the grades served by the school in the most recent year: (1) *Early Elementary*, usually schools ending in grades 1 or 2; (2) *Elementary*, usually schools serving grades K-5 or K-6; (3) *Elementary/Middle*, usually schools serving grades K-8; (4) *Middle*, usually schools serving grades 6-8 or 7-8; (5) *Middle/High or K-12*, usually schools serving grades 7-12 or K-12; and (6) *High*, usually schools serving grades 9-12. The latter five categories are used to calculate percentiles and place schools into Level 3 if they are among the lowest performing 20 percent of schools within that school type category. School percentiles are not calculated for early elementary schools or schools ending in grade 3.

Calculating school percentiles

A school must have four years of valid data, meaning that the school must have assessed at least 20 students in the aggregate over the most recent four year period to receive a school percentile. For each school with valid data, ESE (A) calculates percentile ranks (1-99) for each achievement, improvement, and high school indicator as compared to other schools of the same school type, (B) calculates a mean (average) rank across each of the achievement, improvement, and high school indicators that places progressively more weight on data from more recent years (i.e., 1-2-3-4), (C) standardizes the relative value of the achievement, improvement, and high school means within each school type category so that they are comparable, and (D) combines these means, with the achievement mean weighted more heavily than the improvement and high school means. A more detailed description of the school percentile calculation can be found in [Appendix C](#) of this document.

Comparing cumulative PPIs and school percentiles

While they share the same indicators (i.e., CPI, growth, graduation and dropout rates, and percent *Warning/Failing* and *Advanced*), school percentiles and cumulative PPIs are calculated differently because they are used for different purposes. The cumulative PPI is used to measure whether a school is on track towards reducing its proficiency gaps. Accordingly, PPI points are awarded to a school based on its *own* improvement toward its *own* state-set targets on each of the PPI indicators. On the other hand, percentiles are used to compare schools to other schools serving the same or similar grades. As such, percentiles are calculated by comparing each of these components for a school to other schools of the same school type. Because schools are only being compared to other schools within the same school type category, it would not be accurate to use a school percentile to determine where a school falls relative to all other schools in the state.

Every school's percentile and PPI tell a different story. For example, schools with lower percentiles but higher PPIs for all student groups are showing improvement over time. Schools with higher percentiles but lower PPIs are high performing in relation to other schools, but have more work to do to support student success.

Subgroup percentiles

Subgroup percentiles are used to determine a group's overall performance relative to groups in other schools that serve the same or similar grades. There are two kinds of subgroup percentiles, and both are calculated using the same methodology used to calculate school percentiles. The "in-group" percentile measures a group's overall performance relative to the performance of the same subgroup statewide within the same school type category (e.g., comparing the economically disadvantaged subgroup in one elementary school to all other economically disadvantaged subgroups in elementary schools statewide). The "all-subgroup" percentile measures a group's overall performance relative to the performance of all subgroups statewide within the same school type category (e.g., comparing the economically disadvantaged subgroup in one elementary school to all other subgroups in elementary schools statewide). Any school with one or more groups having both in-group and all-subgroup percentiles of 20 or lower are eligible for classification as a Level 3 *focus* school.

Framework for accountability and assistance

The state's framework for accountability and assistance is a coherent structure for linking the state's accountability and assistance activities with districts based on their level of need.

Classification of schools

All schools with sufficient data, including charter schools, are classified into Levels 1-5, with schools that are meeting their gap-narrowing goals in Level 1 and those that require the most intervention and assistance in Levels 3, 4, and 5. "Sufficient data" means that, at a minimum, at least 20 students in a school or at least 25 students in a subgroup were assessed on ELA and mathematics MCAS or PARCC tests.

Performance

Approximately eighty percent of schools are classified into Level 1 or 2 based on the cumulative PPI for all students and high needs students. For a school to be classified into Level 1, the cumulative PPI for all students and high needs students must be 75 or higher. If either or both of these two groups have a cumulative PPI of less than 75, the school is classified into Level 2.

A school is classified into Level 3 if it is among the lowest performing 20 percent relative to other schools in its school type category statewide as measured by the school percentile, or if one or more subgroups in the school are among the lowest performing 20 percent of subgroups relative to all subgroups statewide. A school with one or more very low performing subgroups is referred to as a Level 3 Focus school. The lowest achieving, least improving Level 3 schools are candidates for classification into Levels

4 and 5, the most serious designations in Massachusetts' accountability system. The decision to classify a school into Level 4 or 5 is made by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

A small number of schools each year are not classified into a level: very small schools, schools ending in grades PK, K, 1 or 2, and schools without four years of sufficient data.

Graduation rates

Beyond the performance-based reasons for classifying schools into Levels 1-5, a high school may also be automatically placed into Level 3 if it has persistently low graduation rates for any student group.

"Persistently low" is defined as a 2014 four-year cohort graduation of less than 67 percent and 2013, 2012, and 2011 five-year cohort graduation rates of less than 70 percent.

Assessment participation

Any district or school with less than 95 percent participation for any student group on any of the assessments is ineligible for classification into Level 1 and is, at a minimum, classified into Level 2. Any district or school with less than 90 percent participation for any student group is ineligible for classification into Levels 1 and 2. In 2015, school participation consequences will also be applied to districts, with the potential for a district to be classified into a level independent of the level of its schools. For accountability purposes, participation calculations include district, school, and subgroup participation in MCAS, PARCC, and ACCESS for English language learners (ELLs) tests, as shown in the table below.

Table 8: Assessments included in subject-area participation rate calculations

Subject area	Assessments included in participation rate calculation
English language arts	MCAS, PARCC, ACCESS
Mathematics	MCAS, PARCC
Science & technology/engineering	MCAS

Participation requirements for each of the assessments are as follows:

- *MCAS and PARCC:*

State law requires that all students in the tested grades who are educated with Massachusetts public funds participate in grade-level MCAS or PARCC tests that correspond with the grade in which they are reported to the Department's Student Information Management System (SIMS). This includes students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), and out-placed students. As such, any student who is absent for one or more test sessions will be reported as a nonparticipant and will count against the participation calculation in the aggregate and in any subgroup of which the student is a member, with one exception: for students who are in their first year of U.S. schooling, schools have the option of administering ELA MCAS or PARCC tests to first-year ELL students. However, first-year ELL students must participate in mathematics and science MCAS or PARCC tests for diagnostic purposes. Their results are not included in school and district accountability calculations.

- **ACCESS:**

To comply with federal and state laws, all ELL students are required to participate in the ACCESS for ELLs English language acquisition assessment. ACCESS participation is required for all ELL students in addition to each of the MCAS or PARCC tests scheduled for their grades, regardless of the program and services they are receiving. This includes first-year ELL students, who may be exempt from ELA MCAS or PARCC testing in their first year of U.S. schooling. Any students designated in SIMS as an ELL or first-year ELL student that does not take ACCESS will be reported as a nonparticipant and will count against the participation calculation in the aggregate and in any subgroup of which the student is a member.

Table 9: School classifications and potential reasons

Level	Reason	Description
Insufficient data	<i>Insufficient data</i>	Very small schools, schools ending in grades 1 or 2 or new schools
Level 1	<i>Meeting gap narrowing goals</i>	Schools for which the cumulative PPI for all students and high needs students is 75 or higher that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 2-5
Level 2	<i>Not meeting gap narrowing goals</i>	Schools for which the cumulative PPI for all students and/or high needs students is 74 or lower that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 3-5
	<i>Low assessment participation (less than 95%)</i>	Schools with less than 95 percent participation for any group in any subject that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 3-5
Level 3	<i>Among lowest performing 20% of schools</i>	Schools with school percentiles between 1 and 20 that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5
	<i>Among lowest performing 20% of subgroups</i>	Schools with one or more student subgroups (A) placing in the 20th percentile or lower relative to all subgroups in the state, and (B) placing in the 20th percentile or lower relative to that particular subgroup within the school type category, that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5; designated <i>focus schools</i>
	<i>Among lowest performing 20% of schools and subgroups</i>	Schools meeting both of the above criteria that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5; designated <i>focus schools</i>
	<i>Persistently low graduation rate for one or more groups</i>	Schools in which one or more groups in the school has a 2014 four-year cohort graduation of less than 67 percent and 2013, 2012, and 2011 five-year cohort graduation rates of less than 70 percent that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5
	<i>Very low assessment participation (less than 90%)</i>	Schools with less than 90 percent participation for any group in any subject that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5
Level 4	<i>Among lowest achieving and least improving schools</i>	Level 3 schools classified into Level 4 by the commissioner
Level 5	<i>Chronically underperforming school</i>	Level 4 schools classified into Level 5 by the commissioner

Commendation schools

A subset of Level 1 schools are recognized as *Commendation schools* for their academic accomplishments. Commendation schools are identified for one or more of the following reasons:

- *High achievement:* High achieving schools are those with the highest relative performance in both the aggregate and for the high-needs subgroup across the PPI achievement indicators (i.e., CPI, percent Warning/Failing, percent Advanced, annual dropout rate, and four-year and five-year cohort graduation rates). To be eligible to be commended for high achievement, a school must:
 - Have been in existence for four full years;
 - Be classified in Level 1;
 - Have a 2015 school percentile of 90 or higher;
 - Have a cumulative PPI of 75 or higher for the aggregate and for all eligible subgroups;
 - Assess at least 95 percent of students in each eligible subgroup on each subject area test;
 - Assess 30 or more high needs students in school years 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14, and 25 or more in school year 2014-15;
 - Rank within the top 10 percent of schools (90th percentile) in the same school type category for both the aggregate and the high needs subgroup for ELA, mathematics, and – if applicable – graduation and dropout rates combined;
 - For all reportable subgroups, rank within the top 40 percent of performance statewide for that subgroup in both ELA and math for the most recent year, by school type;
 - Demonstrate improvement on the CPI for all subgroups in both ELA and mathematics over the most recent four school years; and
 - For high schools, achieve an aggregate five-year cohort graduation rate of 94 percent or higher.
- *High progress:* High progress schools are those with the highest relative performance on the PPI growth/improvement indicators (median SGP and changes in CPI) in both ELA and mathematics for students in the aggregate. To be eligible to be commended for high progress, a school must:
 - Have been in existence for four full years;
 - Be classified in Level 1;
 - Have a cumulative PPI of 75 or higher for the aggregate and for all eligible subgroups;
 - Assess at least 95 percent of students in each eligible subgroup on each subject area test;
 - Assess 20 or more students in the aggregate in each of the most recent four years;
 - Rank within the top 10 percent of schools in the same school type category on the PPI growth/improvement indicators for students in the aggregate;
 - Demonstrate improvement on the CPI in the aggregate and for all subgroups in both ELA and mathematics over the most recent four years; and
 - For high schools, demonstrate improvement in the five-year cohort graduation rate for students in the aggregate over the most recent four years of data, or achieve an aggregate five-year cohort graduation rate of 94 percent or higher for three consecutive years.
- *Narrowing proficiency gaps:* Schools commended for narrowing proficiency gaps are those with the highest relative performance on the PPI growth/improvement indicators in both ELA and

mathematics for students in the high needs subgroup. To be eligible to be commended for narrowing proficiency gaps, a school must:

- Have been in existence for four full years;
- Be classified in Level 1;
- Have a cumulative PPI of 75 or higher for the aggregate and for all eligible subgroups;
- Assess at least 95 percent of students in each eligible subgroup on each subject area test;
- Depending on school type, have a certain percentage of tested students in the high needs subgroup:
 - At least 25 percent for elementary, elementary-middle, and middle-high/ K-12 schools, and
 - At least 20 percent for middle and high schools;
- For each eligible subgroup, rank within the top 40 percent of performance statewide for that subgroup in both ELA and mathematics, by school type
- Be in the top 25 percent of all schools in the state for both ELA and mathematics – measured separately and by school type – based on its progress in closing achievement gaps between the school’s high needs subgroup and the state’s all students group over the last four years, as measured by the CPI; and
- For high schools, have four-year and five-year cohort graduation rates for each subgroup over the past four years that are in the top 40 percent of all high school graduation rates for that subgroup statewide.

Schools that reconfigured in any of the last four school years are not eligible for a commendation.

Classification of districts

In general, a district is classified into the level of its lowest performing school unless it has been placed in Level 4 or 5 by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education independent of the level of its schools. Beginning in 2015, low or very low participation in the aggregate or for any subgroup at the district level may also result in the district being placed into a level independent of the level of its schools. District classification labels displayed on 2015 accountability reports are presented in the table below.

Table 10: District classifications and potential reasons

Level	Reason	Description
Insufficient data	<i>Insufficient data</i>	Very small districts, districts ending in grades 1 or 2 or new districts
Level 1	<i>One or more schools in the district classified into Level 1</i>	All schools in the district are Level 1
Level 2	<i>One or more schools in the district classified into Level 2</i> <i>Low assessment participation (less than 95%)</i>	The most serious level of any school in the district is Level 2 Districts with less than 95 percent participation for any group in any subject that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 3-5
Level 3	<i>One or more schools in the district classified into Level 3</i> <i>Very low assessment participation (less than 90%)</i>	The most serious level of any school in the district is Level 3 Districts with less than 90 percent participation for any group in any subject that do not otherwise meet the criteria for classification into Levels 4-5
Level 4	<i>One or more schools in the district classified into Level 4</i> <i>Underperforming district</i>	The most serious level of any school in the district is Level 4 A district designated as an underperforming district and classified into Level 4 by the Board of Elementary & Secondary Education, independent of its schools
Level 5	<i>Chronically underperforming district</i>	A district designated as a chronically underperforming district and classified into Level 5 by the Board of Elementary & Secondary Education, independent of its schools

Movement between levels

In general, schools can move between levels from year to year based on their PPIs for all students and high needs students, and their school percentile. A Level 4 or 5 school is designated as such by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, and can only be removed from Level 4 or 5 by the commissioner. A Level 3 school can move to Level 2 or 1 if its school percentile is greater than 20, unless it is a Level 3 focus school. A Level 3 focus school, identified for the low performance of student subgroups, must meet the following criteria in order to exit Level 3:

- a) the school's aggregate percentile is higher than 20;
- b) identified subgroups have an annual PPI of 75 or higher for the current year;
- c) identified subgroups have an in-group percentile of 21 or higher for the current year; *and*
- d) no other groups in the school have been newly identified as focus groups.

A district's level may change as the result of a change in level of one or more of its schools, or, in the case of a Level 4 or 5 district, as the result of Board action.

Accountability determinations for districts and schools participating in PARCC in 2015

Both federal and state law require that annual accountability determinations be made for all schools and districts. Typically, results from spring MCAS tests are used in school and district accountability and assistance level calculations for the following school year. However, in spring 2015, some schools administered MCAS and others administered PARCC. Having results from two different assessments required some changes in 2015 accountability reporting, particularly for schools and districts that administered PARCC tests in spring 2015.

Linking assessment results and reporting data

2015 assessment and accountability data are reported for all schools, regardless of whether the school administered MCAS or PARCC. Through a statistical approach called “equipercentile linking”, ESE has linked 2015 MCAS and PARCC results and calculated achievement levels and transitional Composite Performance Index (CPI) scores for each school taking PARCC (see [Appendix A](#) for more details). Using a similar approach, transitional student growth percentiles (SGPs) have also been calculated for schools that administered PARCC. For more information about the equipercentile linking process, visit ESE’s [PARCC website](#).

Accountability and assistance levels in PARCC schools and districts

2015 accountability and assistance levels for schools administering PARCC in spring 2015 are *held harmless*, meaning the level will stay the same or improve from 2014, but cannot decline. The table below provides three examples of accountability determinations for schools that administered PARCC in 2015.

Table 11: Accountability determinations and the hold harmless provision in PARCC schools

	2014				2015				
	Cumulative PPI		School percentile	Level	Cumulative PPI		School percentile	Level – without hold harmless	Level – with hold harmless
	All students	High needs			All students	High needs			
School A	78	76	45	Level 1	76	70	43	Level 2 (declines)	Level 1 (remains the same)
School B	85	68	24	Level 2	74	73	17	Level 3 (declines)	Level 2 (remains the same)
School C	73	70	19	Level 3	77	71	24	Level 2 (improves)	Level 2 (improves)

Typically, schools that have a school percentile of 20 or lower are classified in Level 3 or below, and schools that do not meet the cumulative PPI target of 75 for all students and/or high needs students are

classified in Level 2. However, the hold harmless provision has been implemented so that schools that elected to participate in PARCC in 2015 would not have their accountability and assistance level adversely impacted by their decision. Accordingly, any school administering PARCC in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in any grades 3-8 will not see its level decline due to assessment performance in 2015. This also applies to middle/high schools and K-12 schools that serve grade 10 and one or more other PARCC-tested grades (3-8), with one exception: a school that participated in PARCC in grades 3-8 in 2015 that also serves grade 12 and is eligible for a graduation rate may be placed into Level 3 if one or more student groups in the school has a persistently low graduation rate (a 2014 four-year cohort graduation of less than 67 percent and 2013, 2012, and 2011 five-year cohort graduation rates of less than 70 percent).

Furthermore, a district is typically classified into the level of its lowest performing school unless it has been placed in Level 4 or 5 by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education independent of the level of its schools. In 2015, the hold harmless provision will also apply to district accountability and assistance levels. Districts that administered PARCC in grades 3-8 will have their 2015 accountability and assistance level held harmless from 2014, even if the level of their high school declines.

Schools and districts that did not administer PARCC in any grade in 2015, including schools in which grade 10 is the only tested grade, will be classified into a level as usual, and will not be held harmless.

Understanding school and district accountability reports

Accountability reports for the state and its districts and schools are updated annually. They can be found on ESE's [School and District Profiles](#) website.

School accountability reports

Accountability results for schools are reported in three layers:

- The first layer gives general information about the school, including: the type of school (e.g., elementary), region, grades served, and Title I status; the school's accountability and assistance level and the reason for the level classification; a percentile from 1-99 indicating the school's overall performance relative to other schools that serve the same or similar grades; the cumulative PPI for each group served by the school; and a notation indicating whether the group met or did not meet its PPI target.
- The second layer shows how the annual and cumulative PPIs for a particular group in the school were calculated, the subgroup percentiles for the selected group, and a summary of the group's ELA, mathematics, and science assessment participation rates over the last four years. This information can be accessed by clicking the name of a particular group on the first page of the report.
- The third layer shows detailed data for each indicator that comprises the PPI: narrowing proficiency gaps (ELA, mathematics, and science); growth (ELA and mathematics); the annual dropout rate; the cohort graduation rate; and extra credit (ELA, mathematics, and science achievement, dropout reengagement, and English language acquisition). The third layer also shows detailed ELA, mathematics, and science assessment participation rates for all groups in the school. To view this

layer of the report, click the link titled “View Detailed 2015 Data” from the first layer, the link titled “View Detailed 2015 Data for Each Indicator” from the second layer, or the column heading for 2015 from the second layer. Detailed 2012, 2013, and 2014 data can also be accessed by clicking on the individual column headings on the second layer of the report.

District accountability reports

Accountability results for districts will be reported the same way as for schools, with three important differences to the first layer:

- *Each district’s report will display the district’s determination of need for special education technical assistance or intervention.* The U.S. Department of Education requires Massachusetts to determine which districts (including single school districts) have specific needs for technical assistance or intervention in the area of special education. A district’s determination is based on six categories: *Meets Requirements – Provisional (MRP); Meets Requirements (MR); Meets Requirements – At Risk (MRAR); Needs Technical Assistance (NTA); Needs Intervention (NI); and Needs Substantial Intervention (NSI)*. In most cases these categories correspond to the district’s accountability and assistance level, except when the district has specific compliance needs. This designation helps signal whether outcomes for all students in the district indicate progress, including that of students with disabilities, or whether technical assistance and/or intervention is needed to improve outcomes for all children, especially students with disabilities.
- *A percentile will not be displayed unless the district consists of a single school.* ESE currently does not report district percentiles.
- *Summary information for each school in the district will be listed at the bottom of the page.* The inclusion of this information allows interested parties to quickly access individual school reports.

In addition, there may also be a difference in some of the figures displayed in the district accountability report from those in the school accountability report(s). District accountability reports typically include data for more students than school reports:

- District reports include the assessment results of all students in the district, including those who are placed in private settings and educational collaboratives for the purpose of receiving special education or other services, while school reports only include students enrolled in the school.
- In some cases, a subgroup in a school may not qualify for an accountability determination because fewer than 25 students in the group were assessed on ELA, mathematics, or science tests, but when the assessment results for all of the students in the group across the district are combined, the group is large enough to be included on the district’s report.
- District reports include all students enrolled in the district during the testing window, while calculations for an individual school only include students enrolled in the school as of October 1, 2014 and tested in the same school during the testing window (the period between the March and June SIMS submissions).

School and district reconfigurations and accountability determinations

Each year a number of Massachusetts schools open, close, merge, split, and otherwise change the grades they serve, the typical student populations they serve, and/or their teaching staffs. With less frequency, districts may merge or be newly created. ESE has established business rules that govern how schools and districts that are new or have reconfigured grades are included in the state's accountability system. In general, ESE aims to ensure that accountability data accurately represent the past and present performance of an organization, and to report accountability data for as many schools and districts as possible in a given year.

ESE uses data from pre-existing schools and districts wherever possible to establish baselines upon which to measure performance and issue accountability determinations. When there is no valid and reliable way to establish baseline data, as in the case of a new Commonwealth charter school, a school will be labeled as having "insufficient data" in accountability reporting until such time that sufficient data exist.

Discrepancies and appeals

ESE has a discrepancy reporting system in place which allows districts the opportunity to review their preliminary data for accuracy before it is included in official accountability reports and released to the general public. In certain circumstances, ESE will also consider a school or district's appeal of their accountability determination.

Discrepancies

Since being posted in August 2015, MCAS data have been subjected to extensive external and internal review. PARCC data have undergone a similar, rigorous review. As such, potential discrepancies related to either assessment may no longer be reported. In addition, discrepancies concerning the following data are *not* reportable:

- *ACCESS for ELLs data*. The reporting windows for these data closed in spring 2015; further corrections to these data will not be accepted.
- *Cohort graduation rate data and annual dropout rate data*. The reporting windows for these data closed in winter 2014; further corrections to these data will not be accepted.

Once available, district and school leaders should use their MCAS and/or PARCC data to review their preliminary accountability data. Questions or concerns regarding preliminary accountability data should be directed to ESE's accountability reporting staff at esea@doe.mass.edu.

Appeals

Beyond the correction of discrepancies, ESE has established a process for appealing a district's or school's accountability determination. An appeal is a formal request to change an accountability determination that was based on factually correct data. Appeals should *not* be filed if:

- Related assessment discrepancies were previously reported to and corrected by ESE's Student Assessment office, or
- The acceptance of the appeal will not improve the school or district's accountability and assistance level.

Appeals must be filed by the superintendent or a designee via email to esea@doe.mass.edu. Since being posted on November 19, 2015, the accountability data have been subjected to extensive external and internal review. As such, Thursday, December 3, 2015 was the deadline for submitting 2015 accountability appeals.

Resources

Accountability guidance, lists, & tools	http://www.mass.gov/edu/government/departments-and-boards/ese/programs/accountability/reports/school-and-district-reports.html
Accountability reports	http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/accountability.aspx
ESE Security Portal	https://gateway.edu.state.ma.us/
School/District Profiles	http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/

Appendix A: 2015 PARCC Composite Performance Index (CPI) Concordance Table

The table below shows how CPI points are assigned to each student based on their achievement on MCAS or MCAS-Alternative assessments.

CPI Points per Student	MCAS Achievement Level (Scaled Score Range)	MCAS-Alt Achievement Level	PARCC Scaled Score Range
100	Proficient or Advanced (240-280)	Progressing (certain disabilities)	Varies by grade & subject
75	Needs Improvement – High (230-238)	Progressing or Emerging	Varies by grade & subject
50	Needs Improvement – Low (220-228)	Awareness	Varies by grade & subject
25	Warning/Failing – High (210-218)	Portfolio Incomplete	Varies by grade & subject
0	Warning/Failing – Low (200-208)	Portfolio not Submitted	Varies by grade & subject

Through a statistical approach called “equipercentile linking”, student-level PARCC results can be translated into CPI points and the MCAS achievement scale. The table below shows how CPI points were determined for each student that participated in PARCC in 2015.

2015 PARCC Composite Performance Index (CPI) Concordance Table													
CPI Points per Student	PARCC Scaled Scores												
	Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	Alg 01
100	745-850	735-850	754-850	750-850	743-850	740-850	741-850	741-850	741-850	746-850	727-850	743-850	749-850
75	720-745	724-735	737-754	729-750	725-743	728-740	726-741	730-741	725-741	737-746	712-727	729-743	736-748
50	691-720	708-724	717-737	709-729	711-725	712-728	713-726	717-730	701-725	723-737	695-712	712-729	705-735
25	668-691	667-708	681-717	676-709	677-711	686-712	674-713	685-717	662-700	692-723	662-695	667-712	672-704
0	650-668	650-667	650-681	650-676	650-677	650-686	650-674	650-685	650-662	650-692	650-662	650-667	659-672

* Actual CPI cut points are based on theta values; PARCC scaled score ranges are displayed instead for convenience and accessibility

Appendix B: Criteria for awarding Progress and Performance Index (PPI) points to districts, schools, and subgroups

Core Indicators (up to 7)				
	(A) Achievement	(B) Growth/Improvement	(C) Cohort Graduation Rate	(D) Annual Dropout Rate
	A1, A2, A3 (ELA, Math, Science)	B1, B2 (ELA, Math)	High Schools	
<i>Above Target (100 Points)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPI of 97.5 or higher; or • Met CPI of 90th percentile for all students in the school type category statewide; or • Exceeded CPI target by more than 1.25 points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median SGP of 60 points or higher; or • Median SGP improvement of 15 or more points from prior year 	Four-or five-year rate of 95 percent or higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropout rate of 0 percent; or • Met dropout rate of 90th percentile for all students in the school type category statewide; or • Dropout rate of 3 or more percentage points below annual gap-halving target
<i>On Target (75 Points)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within +/- 1.25 points of CPI target; or • Met CPI of 90th percentile for the group in the school type category statewide; or • Met CPI of 80th percentile for all students in the school type category statewide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median SGP between 51-59; or • 10-14 median SGP point improvement; or • Decreased non-proficient percent by 10 percent or more from prior year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met four-year rate target of 80 percent but was below 95 percent; or • Met five-year rate target of 85 percent but was below 95 percent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met annual gap-halving target; or • Met dropout rate of 90th percentile for the group in the school type category statewide; or • Met dropout rate of 80th percentile for all students in the school type category statewide
<i>Improved Below Target (50 Points)</i>	Improved from prior year but below CPI target minus 1.25 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median SGP of 41-50; or • 1-9 point median SGP improvement from prior year (reported as Below Target) 	Improvement in the four-year or five-year rate of 2.5 percentage points or more from prior year, but below target	Decrease of more than 0.5 percentage points from prior year, but below annual gap-halving target
<i>No Change (25 Points)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change from prior year; or • Up to 2.5 CPI point decline from prior year 	Median SGP of 31-40 (reported as Below Target)	Within +/- 2.5 percentage points of prior four-year or five year rate	Within +/- 0.5 percentage points of prior year rate
<i>Declined (0 Points)</i>	Decline of more than 2.5 CPI points from prior year	Median SGP of 1-30 (reported as Below Target)	Decline of more than 2.5 percentage points from prior year	Increase of greater than 0.5 percentage points

Extra Credit Indicators (up to 7)

	(E) Progress at the Warning/Failing Level	(F) Progress at the Advanced Level	(G) English Language Proficiency	(H) Dropout Reengagement
	E1, E2, E3 (ELA, Math, Science)	F1, F2, F3 (ELA, Math, Science)	(All students, high needs, and ELL/Former ELL only)	High Schools (All students and high needs only)
<i>Met Criteria (+25 Points)</i>	Decrease the percent of students scoring Warning/Failing by 10 percent or more from the prior year	Increase the percent of students scoring Advanced by 10 percent or more from the prior year	Demonstrate high growth on ACCESS for ELLs (SGPA of 60 or higher)	Reengage 2 or more students who dropped out of school in any of the previous four years

Calculating the Annual and Cumulative PPI

Annual PPI Formula:	Cumulative PPI Formula:
Sum of points earned A-G divided by the number of indicators A-D	(Year 1 PPI + Year 2 PPI*2 + Year 3 PPI *3 + Year 4 PPI *4) / 10

Appendix C: Methodology for identifying Level 3, 4, and 5 schools

State context

In accordance with state law, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) annually classifies the lowest performing 20 percent of schools into Level 3. The lowest achieving, least improving Level 3 schools are candidates for classification into Level 4 or 5, the most serious levels in the state's accountability system.⁶

Federal context

Some schools are also classified into Level 3 for low subgroup performance or persistently low graduation rates. As a condition of Massachusetts' flexibility from certain No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements, ESE must identify schools with low subgroup performance over four years as well as schools with persistently low graduation rates. The U.S. Department of Education refers to these schools as "focus schools." Massachusetts schools meeting the federal definition of focus schools are classified into Level 3 and are known as Level 3 focus schools.

1. Identifying the pool of schools eligible for Level 3

In general, a school is included in the Level 3 eligibility pool if it has four years of sufficient achievement and improvement data in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, including the most recent year, and serves one or more tested grades (3-8 and 10). Schools ending in grades PK, K, 1, 2, or 3 and schools without four years of data are excluded from the pool. Twenty percent of the pool of eligible schools in a given year are classified into Level 3 for the low performance of students in the aggregate. In 2015 that number was 310:

Total schools open in 2014-2015	=	1861
Less 158 early elementary schools	=	1703
Less 152 small or new schools	=	1551
20 percent of 1551 (rounded)	=	310

Because schools may also be classified into Level 3 for: (a) low performance of one or more student subgroups; (b) persistently low graduation rates; or (c) very low assessment participation rates, the total number of Level 3 schools in a given year may exceed 20 percent of all eligible schools. See section 5 below.

2. Classifying the pool of eligible Level 3 schools into school types

ESE classifies all eligible schools into one of six school type categories:

⁶ See M.G.L. Ch. 69 (1)(J) for statutory requirements and 603 CMR 2.00 for regulations.

- *Early Elementary* (usually schools ending in grades 1 or 2)
- *Elementary* (usually schools serving grades K-5 or K-6)
- *Elementary/Middle* (usually schools serving grades K-8)
- *Middle* (usually schools serving grades 6-8 or 7-8)
- *Middle/High/K-12* (usually schools serving grades 7-12 or K-12)
- *High* (usually schools serving grades 9-12)

The figures shown in the table below represent the number of schools that could be classified into Level 3 for low aggregate performance by school type in 2015. Level 4 and 5 schools within the lowest performing 20 percent of schools are counted toward the total.

School type	# Schools	Percent	20 Percent
Elementary (ES)	808	52	162
Elementary/Middle (ESMS)	114	7	23
Middle (MS)	287	19	57
Middle/High/K-12 (MSHS/K-12)	83	5	16
High (HS)	259	17	52
Total	1551	100	310

3. Identifying achievement and improvement data included in Level 3 calculations

The achievement data included in Level 3 calculations are:

- 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 Composite Performance Index figures (ELA, mathematics, science)
- 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 Percent Advanced (ELA, mathematics, science)
- 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 Percent Warning/Failing (ELA, mathematics, science)

The improvement data included in Level 3 calculations are:

- 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 Median Student Growth Percentiles (ELA, mathematics)

The high school data included in Level 3 calculations are:

- 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 Annual Dropout Rate⁷
- 2014 Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate⁸
- 2011, 2012, 2013 Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rate

4. Ranking achievement and improvement data by school type

For each elementary, elementary/middle, and middle school, percentile ranks (1-99) are calculated separately for the achievement and improvement indicators as compared to other schools of the

⁷ Annual dropout rates are incorporated into Level 3 calculations for schools serving any combination of grades 9-12.

⁸ 4-and 5-year cohort graduation rates are incorporated into Level 3 calculations for schools ending in grade 12.

same school type, with progressively more weight placed on data from more recent years (4-3-2-1). The averages of each school's achievement and improvement percentiles are standardized separately. These figures are combined, with achievement weighted three times more than improvement. Schools with a mean rank at or below the 20th percentile (1-20) are classified into Level 3 for low aggregate performance.

For each high school and middle/high school, including schools serving grades K-12, percentile ranks for the achievement and improvement indicators are calculated as described above. For the high school indicators, percentile ranks (1-99) are calculated separately for each of the graduation and dropout rate indicators as compared to all other high schools and middle/high/K-12 schools combined, with progressively more weight placed on data from more recent years (4-3-2-1 for annual dropout rate indicators and 3-4-2-1 for graduation rate indicators). The averages of each school's achievement, improvement, and high school indicator percentiles are standardized separately. To calculate the overall school percentile, these three figures are combined, with achievement weighted at 50 percent, and the improvement and combined high school indicators each weighted at 25 percent. Schools with a mean rank at or below the 20th percentile (1-20) are classified into Level 3 for low aggregate performance.

The methodology described above is the same for identifying Level 3 schools for low subgroup performance, with three exceptions. First, the subgroups identified must place among the lowest 20 percent of all subgroups in the school type as well as the lowest 20 percent of that particular subgroup within the school type. Second, all subgroups meeting these criteria are identified in proportion to their representation within their school type category. Third, all subgroups meeting these criteria must also be among the lowest performing 20 percent of all subgroups statewide.

5. Classifying schools into Level 3, 4, and 5

Schools are classified into Level 3 for low aggregate performance if they are among the lowest performing 20 percent relative to other schools of the same school type statewide. In addition, schools are classified into Level 3 for low subgroup performance if one or more subgroups in the school are among the lowest 20 percent of subgroups statewide or one or more subgroups in the school has persistently low graduation rates over four consecutive years (2014 four-year cohort graduation rate less than 67 percent; 2013, 2012, and 2011 five-year cohort graduation rates less than 70 percent).

Schools can also be classified into Level 3 for very low participation rates on statewide tests. Any school that assesses less than 90 percent of any group in the school on MCAS ELA, mathematics, or science tests, PARCC ELA or mathematics tests, or the ACCESS for English language learners English language acquisition assessment cannot be classified higher than Level 3.

The state's lowest achieving, least improving Level 3 schools are candidates for classification into Level 4 at the discretion of the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. A Level 4 school may be classified into Level 5 by the Commissioner on behalf of the Board of Elementary and

Secondary Education if it fails to improve; or if district conditions make it unlikely that the school will make significant improvement without a Level 5 designation.

Appendix D: Accountability and assistance levels and required actions

Based on their accountability and assistance level, schools and districts must meet a number of annual planning, parent/guardian notification, and fiscal requirements. The tables below outline schools and district responsibilities at each level of the framework for district accountability and assistance.

Required actions for districts and schools with insufficient data

Insufficient data			
Occurs when	Planning requirements	Parent/guardian notification requirements	Fiscal requirements
<p>A <i>school</i> is classified as having insufficient data if it is small, ends in grades 1 or 2, or does not have at least 4 consecutive years of assessment data</p> <p>A <i>district</i> is classified as having insufficient data if it is small, ends in grades 1 or 2, or does not have at least 4 consecutive years of assessment data, unless the district was independently classified into Level 4 or 5 as a result of Board action.</p> <p>Absent significant non-compliance issues, a district with insufficient data will have a determination of need for special education technical assistance or intervention of <i>Meets Requirements – Provisional (MRP)</i>.</p>	<p>Analyze disaggregated data for all student groups to ensure interventions and supports are appropriately aligned to address needs.</p> <p>Review and revise district and school improvement plans with respect to the level of implementation of Massachusetts' <i>District Standards and Indicators</i> and the <i>Conditions for School Effectiveness</i>.</p> <p>Consider using online district analysis, review, and assistance tools or feedback from a district review if the district was reviewed by ESE in 2014-15.</p>	<p>Disseminate the school report card to parents/guardians of all children once available. The notification must include the accountability and assistance level of the child's school and district; an explanation of what this designation means; an explanation of how parents can become involved in school and district improvement activities; and information about teacher quality and right-to-know requirements regarding teacher qualifications.</p>	<p>The district has no specific fiscal requirements linked to its accountability and assistance level if the district has insufficient data.</p>

Required actions for districts and schools classified into Level 1

Level 1			
Occurs when	Planning requirements	Parent/guardian notification requirements	Fiscal requirements
<p>A <i>school</i> is classified into Level 1 if the school's aggregate <i>and</i> high needs cumulative PPIs are 75 or higher and the assessment participation rate for all groups in the school is 95 percent or greater.</p> <p>A <i>district</i> is classified into Level 1 if the most serious level of any school in the district is Level 1, unless the district was independently classified into Level 4 or 5 as a result of Board action.</p> <p>Absent significant non-compliance issues, a Level 1 district's determination of need for special education technical assistance or intervention is <i>Meets Requirements (MR)</i>, indicating that outcomes for the district as a whole indicate positive progress.</p>	<p>Analyze disaggregated data for all student groups to ensure interventions and supports are appropriately aligned to address needs.</p> <p>Review and revise district and school improvement plans with respect to the level of implementation of Massachusetts' <i>District Standards and Indicators</i> and the <i>Conditions for School Effectiveness</i>.</p> <p>Consider using online district analysis, review, and assistance tools or feedback from a district review if the district was reviewed by ESE in 2014-15.</p>	<p>Disseminate the school report card to parents/guardians of all children once available. The notification must include the accountability and assistance level of the child's school and district; an explanation of what this designation means; an explanation of how parents can become involved in school and district improvement activities; and information about teacher quality and right-to-know requirements regarding teacher qualifications.</p>	<p>The district has no specific fiscal requirements linked to its accountability and assistance level if the district is classified into Level 1.</p>

Required actions for districts and schools classified into Level 2

Level 2			
Occurs when	Planning requirements	Parent/guardian notification requirements	Fiscal requirements
<p>A <i>school</i> is classified into Level 2 if the school's aggregate <i>or</i> high needs cumulative PPIs are less than 75 or the assessment participation rate for any group in the school is between 90 and 94.9 percent.</p> <p>A <i>district</i> is classified into Level 2 if the most serious level of any school in the district is Level 2 or the assessment participation rate for any group in the district is between 90 and 94.9 percent, unless the district was independently classified into Level 4 or 5 as a result of Board action.</p> <p>Absent significant non-compliance issues, a Level 2 district's determination of need for special education technical assistance or intervention is <i>Meets Requirements – At Risk (MRAR)</i>, indicating that the district is considered to be making progress, but is “at risk” for not meeting the needs of students with disabilities.</p>	<p>Analyze disaggregated data for all student groups to ensure interventions and supports are appropriately aligned to address needs; review the performance of students with disabilities and consider improvement or capacity building activities, as appropriate.</p> <p>Review and revise district and school improvement plans with respect to the level of implementation of Massachusetts' <i>District Standards and Indicators</i> and the <i>Conditions for School Effectiveness</i>.</p> <p>Consider using online district analysis, review, and assistance tools or feedback from a district review if the district was reviewed by ESE in 2014-15.</p>	<p>Disseminate the school report card to parents/guardians of all children once available. The notification must include the accountability and assistance level of the child's school and district; an explanation of what this designation means; an explanation of how parents can become involved in school and district improvement activities; and information about teacher quality and right-to-know requirements regarding teacher qualifications.</p>	<p>Prioritize schools based on need and spend a prescribed portion of the district's Title I, Part A allocation (between 5 and 20 percent on a sliding scale determined by ESE) on interventions and supports that address the needs of the district's lowest-achieving students in its lowest-performing schools, either through an additional allocation of funds directly to schools, through a district reservation, or both, or both, as determined by the district.</p>

Required actions for districts and schools classified into Level 3

Level 3			
Occurs when	Planning requirements	Parent/guardian notification requirements	Fiscal requirements
<p>A <i>school</i> is classified into Level 3 if it places in the lowest 20 percent in the aggregate relative to other schools in the same school type category statewide; one or more subgroups in the school places in the lowest 20 percent of like subgroups within the school type category statewide and also places in the lowest 20 percent of all subgroups statewide; or assessment participation rate for any group in the school is below 90 percent.</p> <p>A <i>district</i> is classified into Level 3 if the most serious level of any school in the district is Level 3 or the assessment participation rate for any group in the district is between 90 and 94.9 percent, unless the district was independently classified into Level 4 or 5 as a result of Board action.</p> <p>A Level 3 district's determination of need for special education technical assistance or intervention is <i>Needs Technical Assistance (NTA)</i>, indicating that while areas of the district's performance may be positive, one or more schools are experiencing poor outcomes for students with disabilities and/or are having compliance issues.</p>	<p>Analyze disaggregated data for all student groups to ensure interventions and supports are appropriately aligned to address needs; review the performance of students with disabilities and consider improvement or capacity building activities, as appropriate.</p> <p>Use the <i>Conditions for School Effectiveness Self-Assessment</i> or the <i>District Standards Self-Assessment</i> to review and revise district and school improvement plans with respect to the level of implementation of Massachusetts' <i>District Standards and Indicators</i> and the <i>Conditions for School Effectiveness</i>.</p> <p>Consider using online district analysis, review, and assistance tools or feedback from a district review if the district was reviewed by ESE in 2014-15.</p> <p>Consult with the District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) regarding the district's proposed supports and interventions for low-performing schools.</p>	<p>Disseminate the school report card to parents/guardians of all children once available. The notification must include the accountability and assistance level of the child's school and district; an explanation of what this designation means; an explanation of how parents can become involved in school and district improvement activities; and information about teacher quality and right-to-know requirements regarding teacher qualifications</p>	<p>Prioritize schools based on need and spend 20 percent of the district's Title I, Part A allocation on interventions and supports that address the needs of the district's lowest-achieving students in its lowest-performing schools, either through an additional allocation of funds directly to schools, through a district reservation, or both, or both, as determined by the district.</p> <p>ESE approves interventions and supports as proposed in district's Title I, Part A grant application.</p> <p>ESE may direct funds under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grant programs for specific improvement activities for students with disabilities.</p>

Required actions for districts and schools classified into Level 4

Level 4			
Occurs when	Planning requirements	Parent/guardian notification requirements	Fiscal requirements
<p>A <i>school</i> may be classified into Level 4 if it is among the lowest-achieving and least-improving Level 3 schools statewide based on common grade levels and has been declared Level 4 by the Commissioner on behalf of the Board.</p>	<p>Implement (existing Level 4 schools) or develop for ESE approval (newly-identified Level 4 schools) a redesign plan that addresses rapid implementation of the <i>Conditions for School Effectiveness</i>.</p>	<p>Disseminate the school report card to parents/guardians of all children once available. The notification must include the accountability and assistance level of the child's school and district; an explanation of what this designation means; an explanation of how parents can become involved in school and district improvement activities; and information about teacher quality and right-to-know requirements regarding teacher qualifications.</p>	<p>Prioritize schools based on need and spend 25 percent of the district's Title I, Part A allocation on interventions and supports that address the needs of the district's lowest-achieving students in its lowest-performing schools, either through an additional allocation of funds directly to schools, through a district reservation, or both, as determined by the district.</p> <p>A Level 4 district will have its use of the flexibility available under the maintenance of effort provisions of the IDEA prohibited and will be required to budget for special education at least as much state and/or local funds in the aggregate or per/pupil as it budgeted in the prior year.</p>
<p>A <i>district</i> is classified into Level 4 if the most serious level of any school in the district is Level 4. In addition, the Board may classify a district into Level 4 upon recommendation of the Commissioner.</p> <p>A Level 4 district's determination of need for special education technical assistance or intervention is <i>Needs Intervention (NI)</i>, indicating that the district has been identified as having significantly poor outcomes for students with disabilities and/or significant compliance issues requiring direct attention from ESE.</p>	<p>Collaborate with ESE to implement (existing Level 4 districts) or develop (newly-identified Level 4 districts) a Level 4 district plan to accelerate district improvement and strengthen its support and intervention efforts in its lowest-performing schools.</p>		

Required actions for districts and schools classified into Level 5

Level 5			
Occurs when	Planning requirements	Parent/guardian notification requirements	Fiscal requirements
<p>A <i>school</i> may be classified into Level 5 by the Commissioner on behalf of the Board at the expiration of its redesign plan if the school has failed to improve as required by the goals, benchmarks, or timetable of its turnaround plan; or if district conditions make it unlikely that the school will make significant improvement without a Level 5 designation.</p> <p>A <i>district</i> is independently eligible for classification into Level 5 on the basis of a district review; the report of an ESE-appointed accountability monitor; a follow-up review report; quantitative indicators set out in state regulations; or failure of a Level 4 district to meet the ESE-approved benchmarks or goals in its improvement plan in a timely manner.</p> <p>A Level 5 district's determination of need for special education technical assistance or intervention is <i>Needs Substantial Intervention (NSI)</i>, indicating that the district has persistent poor outcomes for students with disabilities and/or significant compliance issues requiring direct attention from ESE.</p>	Operate under joint district-ESE governance.	Disseminate the school report card to parents/guardians of all children once available. The notification must include the accountability and assistance level of the child's school and district; an explanation of what this designation means; an explanation of how parents can become involved in school and district improvement activities; and information about teacher quality and right-to-know requirements regarding teacher qualifications.	<p>Prioritize schools based on need and spend 25 percent of the district's Title I, Part A allocation on interventions and supports that address the needs of the district's lowest-achieving students in its lowest-performing schools, either through an additional allocation of funds directly to schools, through a district reservation, or both, as determined by the district and the receiver.</p> <p>ESE may withhold, in whole or in part, any federal special education funds that it deems necessary until specific improvement actions are conducted.</p> <p>A Level 5 district will have its use of the flexibility available under the maintenance of effort provisions of the IDEA prohibited and will be required to budget for special education at least as much state and/or local funds in the aggregate or per/pupil as it budgeted in the prior year.</p>